

# INTEGRITY

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# FREEDOM FROM WANT

August, 1948

Vol. 2, No. 11

## Poverty & The Bourgeois Spirit

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## EDITORIAL



PERHAPS the Christian convulsion going on today, that has been gaining force throughout recent years, is a sort of vomiting out of tepidity. Some day in the future, after heaven knows what strife and what traffic of membership in and out of the Church, men's relations with Christ will be hot or cold again. Then there will be an atmosphere in which Christianity will be at ease. At present the Faith is trying to wade in a sea of marshmallows, is perpetually frustrated by the passive resistance of the bourgeois spirit.

The bourgeois spirit is the spirit of middle-class commercialism: respectable, conservative, appreciative of, and attached to the things of this world. It is the foundation mentality of The American Way of Life. To the bourgeois man it is enough to explain of changing a job that "it pays more money," and it is sufficient praise of a piece of furniture, an office, a home or a car to say that "it is comfortable." His values always are taken in respect to the visible, the sensual, the exterior. He is the antithesis of the man of faith, whose values are set in eternity and whose standards conform to things unseen but yet believed. The bourgeois spirit is the exact opposite of that poverty of spirit which is exalted by the beatitudes. The poor in spirit are those who are detached from possessions, who will own things if necessary but had rather not, who would be unperturbed at the theft of a coat or the loss of a fortune because their happiness does not rest in these things. The bourgeois man delights in his possessions and schemes perpetually to acquire more of them. Those he has are hoarded, hidden in safety deposit vaults, insured, and kept under lock and key. He may not be rich, but if not he wishes he were, and if he is rich he wishes he were richer. He is the man for whom, as they say in the advertisements and solemn sociological reports, this year's luxuries become next year's necessities. How can a luxury become a necessity except by a man's becoming attached to it? In the final analysis the bourgeois spirit is precisely the spirit of attachment, and as such is at the opposite pole from poverty of spirit, which consists essentially in detachment from material possessions.

There is no need to press the point particularly, America is overwhelmingly middle class, overwhelmingly bourgeois. It is interesting to note that the American middle class, to which all except some isolated or racial minorities of us belong, is not the in-between class. It's not middle because it's half-way between our aristocracy and our peasantry,

both of these extremes being virtually non-existent here. America middle class because of its spiritual orientation. It's middle class because it has a business man's mentality, holding manual labor in disdain and fearful of excursions into heroic deeds and poetic fancy. That's why it hates the cross, which carries with it so much sacrifice.

Since our society is bourgeois our problem as Christians is not much to convert people to a comfortable practice of Catholicism which like our own, will eschew asceticism and contemplation, like our own will conform to the spirit of "don't say or do anything that will be bad for business." Our problem is rather to change the spiritual atmosphere of the nation, including ourselves, so that Christianity will be able to breathe a purer air and so grow into a healthy conflagration. How will this be done?

The hopeful thing about the bourgeois spirit in America, despite the fact that it is unprecedentedly unashamed, vulgar and pretentious is that there is a certain naivete about it. Europe had a Christian culture once, whose ghost still stalks the streets of European cities, but scarcely a breath of it remains in the American Middle West. St. Thomas and other fathers of the Church have warned repeatedly of the spiritual dangers to which the business man is exposed, but what young man from Los Angeles or Chicago or Worcester, Massachusetts has ever been cautioned against becoming a millionaire through activities connected with buying or selling? Most Americans are innocent of any knowledge of the historical struggle that has taken place between Christianity and secular materialism, and which has culminated in the almost universal triumph of the bourgeois spirit. Few of us can even imagine a society dominated by the spirit of detachment. Our school politicians, parents, writers and neighbors unanimously acclaim the superior people are people with bathtubs, automobiles and video, and we almost never hear the advantages of traveling light in our passage through this earth because we are en route to a better place.

Hope for America lies in that suggestion of naivete which confronts the ordinary man's unabashed materialism, and which faintly suggests that he has never been given an alternate ideal. It also lies in a prevailing dull unhappiness which assuages itself in drink and divorce, which might indicate a nostalgia for a simpler and purer way of life.

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Within this issue on poverty is a fitting place for us publicly to thank those generous friends who answered our begging letter. Your donations of good wishes, prayers and Masses have placed a legion of angels at our command, and supplied us with a bulging treasury



its on which to draw. We estimated our financial needs as being in the vicinity of five thousand dollars. Donations to date have amounted to just about that sum. Over and above that, our appeal has been answered in renewals and gift subscriptions.

We have tried to send out personal notes of thanks to everyone who has helped us. To those whose gifts were anonymous, and as a heartfelt expression of gratitude to the others, we say thank you and may God reward you.

THE STAFF

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## NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The staff of Integrity is moving to room-to-move-around-in quarters. *Deo gratias!* The new address as of August 1st is: INTEGRITY 46 E. 86th St., New York 28, N. Y.

# Poverty and Love

That poverty can be a blessed thing is an idea that Christianity brought into the world. That poverty can be a good thing is a reaction that only love can give.

The relationship between poverty and Christianity, and between poverty and charity, is one that we have to understand if we are going to be repelled at once by the sight of poverty. If we are to make the world in general realize that poverty has beauty we have to become aware ourselves why Christ was poor, and we have to understand that His poverty was the result of love.

When you mention to people anything about "holy poverty" you get the reaction:

"Well, if poverty is a good thing why is the delinquency rate high in slums? Why do the poor commit more crimes than the rich?"

"You say being poor is helpful. But the poor are much more materialistic and conscious of material things than other people."

"You can't live on love. You must be practical."

We can reply right away, of course, that poverty *by itself* is good. Christianity is not a religion of separated virtues, and to praise poverty by itself and laud it to the skies would be ridiculous. For if we say that the things of the earth—bread and wine and land and house—are good things, how can we say that being deprived of these things is good? How can we make having nothing a virtue?

Poverty isn't good if it's simply negative. It's good because it's positive. Poverty is good in so far as it frees us *to love*.

## Christ and the Pagan

It is because love is the measure of the Christian's perfection that poverty is good. The coming of Christ brought an entirely new way of life into the world. Before Christ (and today without Christ) it was to be expected that people would not value poverty. For if we believe that their happiness lies in the things of this world they can be expected to believe that there is any good in an idea that would deprive them of the things of this world. They might not believe necessarily that they should have more and more of material possessions. A reasonable pagan might come to realize that excessive possessions could be a hindrance; that too much property can be a care, that too much money can be a worry; just as too much food can mean an upset stomach and too much drink a hangover. The pagan moralist who saw the value of temperance could caution against excessive riches since they might crush the mind, burden the spirit and interfere with happiness. But he could not see that poverty could be a holy thing, because to see that would have to have had supernatural love. They were unaware of n



supernatural destiny and could not see the necessity of being emptied of things to be filled with divine life.

Poverty became holy when Christ the Son of God emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, was born in poverty, lived in poverty to such a degree that He declared that He had no place whereon to lay His head, and died owning nothing, because even the clothes He wore were the spoil of a dice game.

Christ is the example of the perfection of poverty. Separated from Christ poverty is nothing; just as separated from Christ and His love God works are nothing. That is why in any discussion of poverty we must be sure not to divorce it from love, or to attempt to treat it by itself.

### Christian Poverty

We have to realize what love demands of us to see that the idea of poverty makes sense. The first commandment of God is that we should love Him with all our heart and soul and strength. How can we love Him with all our heart if our heart is already filled with the love of money and material goods? How can we love Him with our whole soul if our soul has another god besides Him? How can we love Him with all our strength if we have no strength because we are weakened by riches and material possessions which blind us and hinder our loving?

The purpose of poverty is to free us to love. And that means we are not to be stopped in our ascent to God by Cadillacs, stocks and bonds, fur coats, but that all our material possessions are solely to assist us upward. Poverty should free us from our selfish grasping love, from the desire to take all things to ourselves, rather than to treat them with respect as part of the treasure of God. Poverty should make us realize that the goods of the earth are for our use, but that they are exceedingly lower than ourselves, because *men*, not *things*, are made in the image and likeness of God. Consequently, material possessions are to be our servants in serving God. But the opposite result takes place if we are loaded down with them. Then, in trying to gain more and more of them, we allow them to trample us under-foot. We *have* to have them, and as a result we make ourselves lower than they (or at least as low as we become what we love).

It may be observed, of course, that all the above is true of the *spirit of poverty*, but that does not make actual poverty good or necessary. True—it is the spirit rather than the actual poverty that counts. But our Lord Himself had something to say about the difficulty a rich man would have in getting to heaven. We can't judge particular cases. Certainly it may be very possible that a man with a million dollars has more love for God and consequently is nearer heaven than a man with ten cents. But human nature being what it is in actuality—weakened by original sin; and man being what he is—redeemed by Christ, but

still inclined to want to upset the divine order by making mammon more important than God, and by loving riches more than his neighbor. It is well-nigh impossible to reach great sanctity and enjoy all "the good things of life." People who hold the contrary, who say, "of course, God wouldn't want you to do without things," who are scandalized by the "fanatics" who have practiced extreme voluntary poverty, who say that "of course, you must be Christian but you must be comfortable" and that the pillar of the Church is the Catholic who is a successful business man, are in the position of trying to have their cake and eat it. Christ said some very strong things to prove how untenable this position is. But too many of us seem to feel that He was wrong and that we must only be good Christians after we have feathered our nests. To serve God, we feel, we must first serve mammon.

### Unholy Poverty

It is true that not all poverty is holy poverty. We said before that poverty is good if it frees us to love. It stands to reason then that poverty is evil if it hinders us from loving. And it should be one of the sorrows of the Christian today that there is so much unholy poverty. Unholy poverty is willed by man, not by God (except, of course, permissively). It is the poverty which results when men deprive other men of their share in the goods of the earth, and even snatch away from them their modicum of temporal goods necessary to the practice of virtue. Unholy poverty is not good, nor Christian, nor voluntary. For no man should be forced by other men or by a system of economics to extreme poverty just as no man should be forced by other men or by man-made circumstances to give up the right to marriage and to raise a family. Poverty like chastity, should be voluntary. It should be the servant of the Christian in glorifying God; it should not be the brutal punishment meted out to a human being who unfortunately is on the wrong side of the economic system. To make men breathe the air of that system constantly, and consequently to force them to lose their Christian sensibilities, they contemplate continually the god of mammon, and then to condemn them because in their poverty they are materialistic and immoral. The delinquent is the height of hypocrisy. It is like gouging out a man's eyes and then complaining over his blindness of heart and soul because he does not praise the sunlight.

Only a saint can pray on an empty stomach. The poor can become holy if first of all in their poverty they have the spirit of Christ. We cannot expect them to have that spirit if we have forced them to despair.

Many people today live in destitution, not in poverty. They have money but they don't have what they need in the way of material things. (For example, they may earn a fairly good salary but have no place to live.) This is just the opposite of what the situation would



a Christian age when men would have what they need to praise God, but would have very little money. They would live frugally, but they could have food, and air, and a roof over their heads. They would recognize that all these good things came to them from God and they could be free to love Him.

Love can lead us to poverty, but poverty by itself will never lead us to love. Love led the Son of God to the possession of nothing, and love has led many of His followers to imitate His example in order that they may reach the fullness of love.

## Poverty and Enjoyment

Poverty does not prevent us from enjoying things, rather it aids us to enjoy them freely and fully. The difference between the man who is poor in spirit, and the man who is choked with the riches of life is this: the first man does not think he *has* to have things, but if they are given to him he really enjoys them. The second man has to have them, but he doesn't enjoy them, because he isn't free to do so. He is bound by them. For instance, he would be woefully unhappy and uncomfortable if he couldn't get his plane reservation, but when he is on the airplane he sits and reads his newspaper without a single glance at the sun or the clouds or the earth. He does not look particularly happy; he is bored with things, but insists on having them. The person who is poor in spirit, on the contrary, gets a great thrill out of riding in an airplane, finds in it an opportunity of praising the magnificence of God in His works, but would be just as happy if airplanes never existed. In other words, they are not essential to his happiness, but he does appreciate them. The man who lacks the spirit of poverty finds material things essential to his happiness, but does not appreciate them, because to do so it would be necessary for him to appreciate God. He cannot enjoy them with simple abandon because he has the fear of losing them, while at the same time he is making the struggle to acquire more.

Poverty of spirit is a blessed, joyful thing. You will realize the bliss of it if moved by grace you can say, "Lord God, in the simplicity of my heart, I joyfully offer you all these things." You will find that once recognizing God's dominion over things, you will exclaim with gratitude over everything He does give you. Life will become a continual cycle of loving and rejoicing. You freely give to Him what He has freely given to you. You recognize the goodness of the *thing*, and you see the goodness of referring it to God. A glass of wine, strawberry shortcake, a bed and a chair, you come to know are wonderful things, and you know this is so, not because *you own* them, but because in the sight of God they are good.

That is why Christians must use things as if they used them not; that why they must embrace poverty completely—if not actually in regard

to external things, at least in the depths of their souls by wrenching from themselves their *absorption in possession*. For it is a great mystery of Christianity that there is only one way to possess all things, and that is by having nothing.

That is the perfect bliss of which Saint Francis speaks, when his soul is utterly free from the riches of the world, and is poor in its interior, and can simply and happily go on to union with God. To possess God Who is All we can be attached to nothing else.

## Poverty and Providence

If we believe we have to practise poverty to grow in love, we shall be encouraged; for, if we live a Christian life, there is plenty of opportunity to practise poverty in our age. Since our civilization is estranged from Christ, and geared to the service of money, it is highly improbable for anyone who goes against the spirit of the age to be a success and to make money. Today more than ever one cannot "get ahead" and still possess the kingdom of God.

But Christ Who gave us the example of poverty also gave us consolation and support in the enduring of it. It might be well to remember that poverty was not necessary for Christ. There was no danger that He would have an inordinate love for the things of this world. He was God and perfect man. He possessed poverty of spirit in the highest degree. There was no reason why He should endure actual poverty except to glorify His Father by giving us a perfect example.

It is Christ Who gives us the strength and grace to endure poverty as He becomes ours every day in the Mass. And it is in Christ that we must put our faith that we won't be tried beyond that which we are able to bear or be deprived of that which we absolutely need. Will the Christ Who had compassion on the multitude, because they were three days in the desert without food, let us go hungry? Will the Christ Who appreciated the worth of a few loaves and fishes let us go without bread? And will the Christ Who assured us that His Heavenly Father knows that we have no need of these things, suddenly neglect to remind Him of our needs?

Let us have confidence in the providence of God. That is the answer to the perplexity of poverty in our day; that is the only lightening of the burden of poverty. To be Christian, and to advance in the love of God, to rejoice in your poverty when the boss tells you it would be imprudent for you to have another child on your salary, or when you are expecting your third baby in a one-bedroom apartment, or if you are over forty and single and are losing your job in a dress shop because the owner has decided to get younger, more attractive salesgirls, — to rejoice then in your poverty requires the tremendous grace that only throwing yourself on the providence of God can give. God *will* provide as He provided for Mary and Joseph and the Christ Child. But



ill to recall that He provided for them *in poverty*, not *in wealth*; in Bethlehem a stable, not a suite of rooms in the local Waldorf. Mary came to Egypt on a donkey, not in the prevailing equivalent limousine. God will give us what we need, but that does not mean He will give us what we think we have to have. The providence of God is no substitute for insurance (even though insurance is often made to be a substitute for the providence of God). God's providence does not guarantee you \$200 a month when you reach the age of sixty-five, nor does He bestow on you \$1,000 when you become twenty-one. But it does assure you that if you seek first His kingdom "all these things (which you need) shall be added unto you."

Relying on God's providence won't save us from the sufferings of poverty. It is not supposed to do so. Poverty is good because it purifies the soul, and it may very well be that in God's providence our soul is being purified by our being deprived of something we need, at least for a time.

Poverty is part of the cross, and Christians should worry not if they have something to suffer, but if they have no cross. For the cross is the only way to Christ.

### Poverty and the Cross

There is a great need in our age for voluntary poverty, for people who will go beyond the obligation to poverty of spirit which binds all Christians, and follow the counsel of poverty in actuality. There is a need for lay people who, inspired by grace, will realize with Saint Augustine that "it is better to need little than to have much," who will leave jobs "with prospects of advancement" to get jobs where they can be of greater benefit to other persons, who will do humble, menial tasks to show men the dignity of being lowly, who will become window-washers instead of lawyers and bankers to show the world that money and position do not matter, but that love of God and charity to our neighbor are the measure of success. There is a need for lay people who will not hesitate to live among the poor (not the respectable, clean poor, but the dirty, rotten, sinful poor) to serve them, to help free them from an unholy poverty and to bring them back to Christ.

And above all there is need among lay people for those who will embrace voluntary poverty to declare to the world that the first function of man is to praise God. There is need of some who at one swift stroke will free themselves from the goods of the world to devote themselves to *the one thing necessary*: the contemplation of God. Poverty is good, of course, because it facilitates the service of our neighbor, but it is good primarily because it frees us to love and glorify God.

Christians who would be true Christians today are called upon to practise the poverty of Nazareth, to live frugally, with respect for the

things God has given them, not desiring to keep up with the Joneses, not desiring to increase their wants, but in simplicity living like the Holy Family, and trying to love God with their whole heart and soul. They are called upon to imitate the poverty of Christ at Nazareth. But there are some who are invited to go beyond this, and imitate the poverty of Calvary. About such a vocation we have little to say—except that it is an age that cries for heroism. It is an age when a multitude of men have never even heard of the cross or of Christ or of redemption. And they will be brought to Christ only if some who are won by the love of God will let Christ re-live in them His utter poverty, desolation, and crucifixion.

May the poverty of Calvary draw many lay persons to live in voluntary poverty. May it inspire many with the great desire to strip themselves completely as Christ did, that, being filled with Him, they may restore souls to Him. Such voluntary poverty would be the short-cut to sanctity, and the necessary condition for Christ to re-live in the lives of these particular persons the sacrifice of the cross.

The height of utter poverty is Calvary. But beatitude on earth is the cross, and God alone knows how close Calvary is to heaven.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS



#### DRAWING THE LINE

A Bishop needs a crozier,

A poet needs a pen,

But painted neckties are the least

Of all the needs of men.



# The Liturgy of Secularism

*A circular letter from the Chaplain of Commerce  
of the National Association of Materialists*

Dear Brethren:

One of our prophets who has now gone to his eternal dividends, has said: "The desire of poverty is the root of all evil." It is in order that this sin may be far from your hearts, and that the life of usury may be read through all the free markets, that we here gather for your edification some of the Fiscal Feasts and Pecuniary Practices that have arisen in our Sales-Dioceses throughout the territories. We want to see all our correspondents live the life of commerce, and aspire to rise from the lower orders of acquisitiveness, through the dark night of debt, and attain to the pure contemplation of money as practiced by our brethren in the cloisters of the Manhattan rite, who have reached the state of Pure Gilt.

We have absorbed all that could be utilized of the decadent Christian practices, and have signed them with the dollar sign, so that it is no longer necessary to keep up the pretense of Christianity in order to promote sales and the worship of wealth.

We acknowledge at this time the great debt we owe for this transition to the Abbots of Advertising who have worked day and night to accumulate the Summa of Satiation. What wonders have they not accomplished in arousing the virtues of envy and avarice among the city!

These brothers and sisters of simony have labored over the illuminated manuscripts of temptation. What new desires they have created! Who can now be satisfied short of complete service to Holy Money? Their work goes on, "singing to Holy Money in spot canticles on the radio. Let the love of lucre dwell in your hearts. Be discontented with what you have."

## The Year of Yearning

It is some time now since the Doctrine of Dissipation was openly promulgated. Foremost in this accomplishment were those auxiliaries of Capital Action, the Initiates of Inebriation, who conduct the Saturday night retreats, at which special prayers are offered for the spread of gluttony and alcoholism. No one has done more toward abolishing the superstition of Sunday Mass which interfered so with the habit of Sunday recreation. They first made the Sunday noon Mass popular and finally abolished it altogether, except for a few incorrigibles.

These votaries of voluptuousness have the honor of beginning the concupiscential year with the glorious celebration of New Year's Eve. This especially commemorates the opening of the Dissipation

Dispensation. Honor is paid to the virtue of hilarity when the Novices of Noise are unveiled and take a vow of unquietness, after which they are baptized with champagne and enter upon a year of disturbance.

January also marks the beginning of the Fiscal Year when the Friars of Finance and Decimal Deacons, as well as the Missionaries of Merchandising and Manufacture, are engaged in the Summing Up. These holy men renew their vows of monopoly and monotony at this time, binding themselves to the machines and the cash registers for another year. None of the faithful need despair of reaching this happy estate if they persevere in daily devotion to the libido.

### **The Resurrection of Money**

One of our first escapes from the Christian shackles was in capturing the feast of Easter. The preparation which they called Lent, during which they underwent mourning and self-denial so repugnant to us, has been changed to the forty shopping days, making Easter a buy-week second only to Yuletide.

The Eremites of Esoteric Eating pay particular devotion on this day to the Ham and the Egg. The symbolism of the Easter Bunny portrays the fecundity of money, and children are taught the first step in enterprise in the Easter Egg hunt. The crowning rite, however, is the Easter procession in honor of the Spring Turnover and the blessing of the New Clothes. Anyone who is found without an Easter garment is excommunicated from the bargain tables in the Basement Chapel and the Escalator Cathedrals. The particular lesson of this celebration is the necessity of daily envy. "Greed, avarice, and envy, but the greatest of these is envy."

### **Novena to Oscar**

About the time of the full Kleig light the novena to Oscar is celebrated. This festival had been restricted to the Hollywood rite, but through radio and television it has been extended to all the faithful. It is held in high honor since the Hermits of Hollywood have been most zealous in the spread of our worship. They were the first to petition for the declaration of the Doctrine of Sexifying Grace and they have been valiant defenders of the Sacrament of Divorce.

During this novena the Cinemites of the strict observance abstain from prayer and feasting, and consultation with the Discalced Columnists. They choose the outstanding brother or sister, who is awarded a genuine Radiolite statue of Oscar, the god of Exhibitionism.

### **Venus at the Beach**

A summer ritual which is very fruitful is that conducted by the Manhattan rite at Atlantic City. Here are gathered from every Sacred District the beautiful maidens who have reached the age of Publicity. From these is chosen Miss Concupiscence of America in the love



mbolism of the Pin-Uptual ceremony. I would urge everyone who cannot attend to make private acts of desire, in union with the celestials at this festival.

The fortunate young woman is sent to Hollywood to join the Sisterhood of Sex. This Sisterhood has been zealous in the cultivation of the Exterior Life and the virtue of vanity. We are happy to see so many women confirmed in vanity by the Confraternity of Cosmetology, with the application of the Holy Oils, Paints, Creams and Deodorants. By the use of these sacramentals women are made new creatures, adepts at allure, and pursuers of men.

### Meretricious Xmas

Now I come to our greatest triumph, which is the adaptation to our purposes of Yuletide, or Xmas. This is a sales feast of double entry and, secondarily, a feast for gourmets. By astute missionary work it has been extended from the Feast of Eating (formerly Thanksgiving) to make a month long advent of shopping.

It begins with the Santa Claus procession when he is installed in the Escalator Cathedrals. This is known as the Miracle of the Multiplication of Santa Claus. Santa is the forerunner of Mammon, "making straight the paths to the cash register." After the procession comes the vesting of Santa and his installation on the Throne of Purchasing.

During the advent of shopping days it is the custom to indicate the number of days remaining with a lighted candle. As each day passes a candle is extinguished until as the final days approach all sales resistance is overcome and the buying reaches a frenzied or ecstatic state. The Feast itself is followed by the Octave of Exchange.

This is the season when the dear little ones are told the beauties of avarice or envy and are carefully prepared for the Sacrament of the First Purchase. To make sure that the children are ready for this rite, they are given rigorous examinations in the Catechism of Coveting and tested in the love of money. Also at this season the children are supplied with toy models of all gadgets so that when they grow up they will have a complete knowledge of things they cannot do without. It is a time for singing hymns full of the sentiments of the season such as the song of the first angels of enterprise, "Glory in Excess." It is so a pious practice to have little shrines in the home to Stable Income, and trees decorated with stocks and bonds and piggy banks.

This is the time to teach the young the necessity of spending in order that the Monasteries of Sacred Technology may continue to perform their sacred rites. We urge that all the Diocesan Simonaries establish courses in Foolish Spending. It is not our wish to see only

an elite of Wise Spenders, for it is the mites of the Foolish Spenders that make our faith so strong.

All these things emphasize the essential nature of our belief which is change; always becoming and never stagnating into being. It replaces the Christian abnegation with the virtue of attachment. "Attached to everything and everything will be added unto you."

In conclusion, dear brethren, we wish to state that these are merely counsels and in no way intended to injure our glorious spirit of Free Enterprise and Self-reliance. In all things may the faithful be instructed with the love of the perishable, that we may avoid the Glutted Market and the Satisfied Desire, and that we may all be one in financial bondage.

Materialistically yours,

GOODE EVANS,  
Chaplain of Commerce

By JOHN HICKS



#### WALL STREET HERETIC

"Money isn't everything,"

J. G. was heard to say  
They melted down his deep  
plate,

And had him put away



# Contemplation In A Rocking Chair

Perhaps one of the most characteristic things about "middle-class culture" is its genius for evasions. One of the fundamental traits of bourgeois society seems to be the complex structure of fictions and distractions which men have built around themselves as a screen behind which human nature can be as small and as greedy and as mean as it pleases without being ridiculed or disturbed. We have been living, especially for the last two centuries, in a society overcrowded with scapegoats. We excel in surrounding ourselves with straw men on which we shift all our responsibilities. Or, if we happen to be a bit intelligent, we keep them there in order to have a target for our anger when our conscience tempts us to be dissatisfied with our own selves. But behind it all are the souls of individual men and women, each infected with the same disease, each one trying to convince himself that he is not sick by fixing the sickness on some big, monumental abstraction, on something that exists more in the minds of men than in reality.

By a strange irony, this habit has become so deeply ingrained in the minds of men of our day that even the term *bourgeoisie* has assumed a prominent place as one of the middle class's favorite scapegoats. We who have had the misfortune of being born into the middle class try to forget about it, try to dissociate ourselves from it by making fun of it as if we had been born and bred somewhere in interstellar space and then came down to earth to observe the strange activities of other men.

Nevertheless, the truth remains that we who are Catholics and mean to take our religion seriously must, without any doubt or hesitation or compromise, do everything we can to fight our way out of this sticky and unpleasant social matrix in order to recover our true identity in Christ. Remember that for us whose background is the middle class and its materialism and its love of comfort and pleasure, that class is coextensive with one of the three enemies of Christian life. We are dedicated without reserve, by our Baptism and incorporation in Christ, to fight the world, the flesh and the devil. And if we were born and brought up as bourgeois, then for us the middle class *is* the world—the first and in some ways the most difficult of our three enemies.

We have all been born with many handicaps. And the fact of being bourgeois is not something we get rid of in Baptism, like original sin. On the contrary, it is something that begins to grow on us along with our intellectual and spiritual life. It is a fungus that fixes on our souls and develops with them and at their expense and chokes out the growth of real Christianity, the true love of God.

Nevertheless it is no use to erect the notion of the middle class into a scapegoat from which we can stand back and detach ourselves in our own imaginations and upon which we can heap a certain amount of abuse without in fact doing anything to clean the worldliness out of our own actual, individual souls. After all, if we do that we are only favoring the disease that is in us instead of curing it because, as has just been said, one of the characteristics of that disease is the facility with which it evades responsibility by substituting fictions for reality.

There is no need to remind ourselves how, instead of helping and loving one another as Christians should, we follow the current of our society and give money to an organization that feeds a multitude of anonymous ciphers at the other end of the earth and then seek some outlet for our human feelings by going down to the movies and weeping over the death of the heroine's grandmother. There is no need to remind ourselves how we evade the responsibility of thinking by turning on a radio and letting a commentator deafen us with statements. We are generally well enough aware of the vices we share with the whole society of our time. The danger comes in when we try to escape from the world to the Church, but only succeed in making of our conversion another bourgeois evasion. It is all too easy to take all of our middle-class mentality to church with us where, instead of throwing off the old man, the old bourgeois, we simply give him a new name and then light a candle and pray happily for his success.

In the six hundred years or so in which the Catholic Church has had to exist in a world dominated by the middle class there has been a little infiltration of its evils into some cells of the Mystical Body. That is not surprising. Christ, like the husbandman in the parable, foresaw from the start that cockle would be scattered in the good wheat by "an enemy" and He determined to "let both grow until the harvest." The very necessity of a reaction on the part of the healthy members of His Body who would be compelled to resist this infiltration in themselves and in their neighbors would all contribute to the sanctity of the Church. And so the evil influence might after all be an occasion of good. The thing for us to do, then, is to realize the real evil and react against it. And the first thing to recognize is that we will be tempted constantly to fight windmills and load our sins upon scapegoats and evade reality behind a screen of fictions and substitutions and thus to end up where we started.

Nevertheless, it is a great thing to be enlightened at least to the point of realizing that the middle-class mentality is a spiritual evil and that it is Christ's enemy and a spiritual poison, provided we keep it on the concrete plane and do not divorce it entirely from the concept of our own worldliness which is the bourgeois spirit operating in us.



It is one of the most apparent misfortunes of the Church in our century to have become almost identified in certain minds with the middle class as if the interests of the Church were identical with those of the *bourgeoisie*. That identification is impossible because opposites cannot be identified. It is like saying Christ casts out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. But since in actual fact so many Catholics live lives that are, for them, a practical identification of these two opposites, the idea prevails in the camp of Christ's worst enemies that Catholicism is, indeed, nothing but a front for the *bourgeoisie*.

*There is no answer to this argument except the practical one of Christian perfection, sanctity.* The tree has to be proven by its fruits, and the thing that so many of us seem to forget is that the communists have a right to demand that we show fruits worthy of Christ's doctrine. No one is so naive as to suppose that they would fall in love with us if we were the kind of Christians we are supposed to be; they probably would hate us even more. But the fact remains that for too many of us Christian perfection has been lost and obscured in a vague cloud of bourgeois fictions and evasions and therefore our lives are not, in fact, Christian, no matter how much we may endeavor to console ourselves with a few exterior formalities and gestures. *Populus hic labiis me honorat; cor autem eorum longe est a me.*

The impact of the *bourgeoisie* on Christianity has had the same characteristic features as its impact on every other department of life. It has produced a huge network of evasions and substitutions all around the fringe of Christianity. It cannot affect the essence of Christianity itself because the world cannot touch the heart of the Church. But it can certainly defile her garments. And thus the bourgeois spirit tends to work its way into Catholicism in order to get rid of the real thing and replace it by a cheap imitation. The purpose of this is the usual one: *to evade the trouble of leading a complete, integral Catholic life* by substituting sentiment for virtue, emotion for charity, formalities for prayer and exterior gestures for self-denial and sacrifice.

The centuries dominated by the middle class have seen a progressive degeneration of Catholic art, liturgy, music, architecture, and all the other exterior aids to spirituality which human talent can offer.

Now since the contemplative life and contemplative prayer are so close to the heart of Christianity and so intimately connected with Christian perfection it is inevitable that the middle-class mentality should subject them both to special treatment. Once again, it is the same old business of evasion and substitution. Take contemplation and empty it of all reality and all vital energy and offer up the empty shell, the dry husk instead of the real thing. The Holy See has had to

condemn several of these substitutes of which the most dangerous, itself, is the heresy of quietism.

Quietism is not, of course, an exclusively middle-class product. There is a certain instinct for inertia in fallen human nature. We turn of ourselves towards an ideal of rest which excludes all effort and at the expense of thought or of desire. This is characteristic of Oriental mysticism which is really not contemplation at all. Since the love of comfort and the hatred of effort are fundamental to the bourgeois spirit, it is scarcely surprising that quietism should have taken root in the Europe of the middle class.

But we cannot understand the vices of the substitute if we know nothing about the genuine article. True contemplation is a gift of God produced in the soul by the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially understanding and wisdom. It is itself nothing else but an experience of God revealing Himself to us in the intimate embrace of a love so pure that it overwhelms every other affection and excludes everything from our souls but the knowledge of Love alone. In the words of Saint Bernard, *Qui amat, amat et aliud novit nihil*.

The union of the soul with God in contemplation is effected in the depths of a holy darkness in which the intellect is blinded by excess of light and in which the natural powers of man, reduced to incapacity by the actual contact of an object Who is Infinite, are elevated and transported above the human level. In terms of human experience the early stages of contemplation seem like inactivity but that is far from true. On the contrary, the mind and will, blinded by darkness and aridity, are really being lifted to a degree of action that is far superior to anything our nature can comprehend. In fact, human nature has subordinated its function as the principle of these immanent operations and our faculties are now moved directly by God Himself.

So profound and complete and intense is the interior activity of the soul under the direction of God in contemplation that Saint John of the Cross does not hesitate to say that it is in mystical union that the soul "*attains to a true fulfilment of the first commandment*," namely to "Love the Lord our God with our whole heart and our whole mind and our whole strength." Saint John's statement is a strong one but his explanation is no less strong and perfectly clear. It is, he says, only in infused contemplation that the energies of the soul are completely united in God without any possibility of wandering away to any other object. It is only in mystical union that it really becomes possible for us literally to concentrate our whole mind and heart and soul and strength upon God. Without it we can only love Him with a love that falls somewhere short of this perfection. In mystical union, and above all in the mystical marriage, we reach the summit of supernatural perfection.



fection on earth and attain the end for which we were brought into existence. For, as Saint John of the Cross says, "*it was for the goal of this love that we were created.*" It is a goal which most of us, unfortunately, never reach until we get to heaven. But at any rate it brings with it the full expansion and perfection of all our faculties and all our natural and supernatural gifts in the one work which is supreme and transcends every other—that of loving God with the same love by which He loves Himself.

The way to this love is a path of labor and effort and sacrifice. It means striving to detach ourselves from everything that is not God. It means not only withdrawing from the pleasures and ambitions of the world but even from the highest and most perfect natural activities of the mind and will. To the pure contemplative even the intuitions and reasoning of the metaphysician and the speculative theologian can, under certain circumstances, be a temptation and he must then put them aside as not good enough for him, and keep his eyes fixed on a higher ideal that is baffling because it is incomprehensible. Even the desire for the consolations of prayer and the ardor of sensible love and felt enthusiasm can be an obstacle to the soul's advance to union with God in the cloud of darkness. The way of contemplation demands the most complete and irrevocable sacrifice of everything that human nature could possibly prize and desire. It is a narrow way—so narrow that few are willing to enter upon it, or stay on it when they find out how narrow it actually is.

Contemplation costs so much that it offers itself as one of the most obvious subjects for bourgeois evasion. And quietism certainly did a good job of it. On the surface, quietism looks a little like contemplation. The faculties do, indeed, renounce their natural activity. The soul does remain empty and dark. It does enjoy a kind of rest. But the rest is not the peace of contact with God, it is nothing but the natural repose of inactivity. This is not the sleep in which the bride sings that her "heart watcheth"—*Ego domio sed cor meum vigilat*—it is simply the sleep of a corpse or the trance of someone who had been drugged or hypnotised.

The emptiness and darkness of quietism are void indeed because there is nothing behind them: they are the emptiness and darkness of the abyss. This is not the blessed night, the *vere beata nox* of which the Church sings on Holy Saturday, it is the darkness that is properly called stygian, overshadowed by the wings of the demon.

And so, in fact, quietism is as opposed to true contemplation as hell to heaven. Instead of being the perfection of pure love quietism denies and annihilates and refuses and abjures all love. It banishes and excludes all movement of desire, all hope of union, all tendency to

seek God as our fulfilment and our reward. With the cessation of effort and all desire comes the repudiation of virtue, prayer, sacrifice. The extreme quietists went so far that they thought it was even an act of great imperfection and "self-will" to trouble their complete inertia of soul by resisting temptation. For all these things the Church had had to condemn them.

In a way, quietism is the triumph of the bourgeois spirit. It has carried all the evasions to their logical extreme by evading *everything*. It has turned all the values of Christianity inside out and it has done this in the name of sanctity and Christian perfection. It has discovered that the supreme sacrifice is to give up even sacrifice itself. It has found out that the purest love is not to love at all. It has made love pure by annihilating the loving subject altogether and thus, in the name of love, it has rejected all love and made of it an imperfection and a sin.

It was certainly a convenient creed, this cult of utter inertia. In the face of the unpleasant and difficult things about Christianity, all that nasty business about taking up the Cross—it was all found to be not only unnecessary but even "less perfect." It could now be looked upon as a vulgar and "human" effort at virtue to which this new mode of total annihilation was infinitely superior because it was so much more spiritual. In fact it was more than angelic, it was divine.

The bourgeois apostles of this heresy made a typical appeal to the members of their class when they asserted, with Mme. Guyon, that they had discovered a "quick way," an "easy way" to God. And yet it was not altogether easy to be a pure quietist either. Although we tend to let our inertia our minds and imaginations can never rest in themselves alone and therefore it requires a peculiar effort and discipline just to keep your mind empty and inactive. In spite of yourself activities and desires keep crowding in. In spite of yourself you find that you tend to seek rest not in nothing but in God, and commit the imperfection of doing things to please Him. And so pure quietism never appealed to very many disciples.

Semi-quietism has had much more success and the fact is that to practise it is much more convenient an error. In the first place it does not have the drawback of being extreme; and your bourgeois is afraid of extremes. Semi-quietism is nice and comfy and contains all the evasion of difficulties that the middle class could possibly desire without demanding an "emptiness" and an "annihilation" that would themselves imply some kind of concentration and effort. In fact, what semi-quietism boils down to in practise is this: you lead a comfortable life, denying yourself nothing that you really want and only taking care to avoid the sins that would really upset your life in a social way. You do not make too much effort to get out of bad habits which y



erish, you say, because they are so valuable in keeping you "humble." You "sanctify" everything with an act of pure intention, which means that you do whatever you like, but first pronounce a little formula dedicating the act to God. Of course you take good care not to develop any such thing as a tender conscience, examination of which might reveal that God did not really want these selfish acts that were dedicated so glibly to Him. And in any case it is too much bother to keep repeating and renewing your formula since you have found out that it is quite sufficient just to make the offering once a day—if you remember to do so while ambling down to breakfast and enjoying the sweet smell of fried eggs and hot rolls. Meditation? Contemplation? They all boil down to the same thing: you spend fifteen minutes with a blank mind, allowing distractions to pour through you without let or hindrance, without any desire to love or know or find God. But in any case, those fifteen minutes are apt to take a less and less frequent part in your life since you find that contemplation is much more easy and effective in a rocking chair with a pack of cigarettes and a picture magazine.

And still, perhaps one shouldn't complain: it is no small thing in the world we live in that there should actually be some people left who know that meditation and contemplation exist at all.

However, there are many different forms of laziness to which human nature is attracted under the guise of virtue. There is another way to evade the responsibilities and efforts implied by a deep interior life. And this temptation also makes many victims in America. It seems to be a far call from quietism. In fact, many fall into it on the pretext of getting away from quietism which they openly despise.

You know the type. He is a busy, active person. His imagination works overtime and keeps him jumping from project to project and ambition to ambition. He would like to lead a deep interior life. He has read a lot of books about it and can talk about mystical contemplation with a certain facility. But when it comes to subjecting himself to the long, obscure process of interior mortification and purification that a deep interior life demands, he seizes any excuse to run away. For him activity is a refuge. He flies to it at every possible opportunity, to get away from the spectre of that dry darkness in which God would perhaps come too close and make too many demands and begin to strip him of himself and leave him in all his poverty and helplessness and fear.

It does not matter whether you evade the responsibilities of a contemplative vocation by too much activity or too little; in the end it is the same laziness and the same evasion. The substitute may only be something less good, not an outright evil. But if God wants you—

as perhaps He wants many—to find perfection through a close union with Him in prayer, you will do a great disservice to yourself and the Church and will show no little ingratitude to God if you too carelessly allow yourself to be drawn off into one of these evasions. And yet the danger is immeasurably great in a time when the spirit of materialism, the middle-class spirit, still pervades everything, where has not already begun to give way to a more atrocious spirit still. Here the materialism of the communist, as far as the intellectual and spiritual life is concerned, retains all the most deadening elements of the *bourgeoisie*. The revolutionary impetus does, it is true, attract a few mirrors with a certain vitality in them but wherever the "Party" gains power everything spiritual and intellectual congeals into a mass of sickening ugliness and mediocrity beside which the worst outrages of bourgeois culture can claim a certain charm.

For us there remains one duty: the evasion of all these evasions and the discovery of reality. The simplest way is the way that was taken by Saint Francis of Assisi. Born of a bourgeois father and brought up in the bosom of the early *bourgeoisie*, Saint Francis had only one answer to the claims of his class and his culture when they made the inevitable attempt to frustrate his vocation. He stripped himself of every shred of clothing his father had given him and walked out into the world naked. His example was without doubt providential. Francis' longing to be identified with everything the middle class has with an unutterable loathing was given us by God as the clear and unequivocal path by which we too can leave our "people and our father's house" and begin to travel the quickest road to sanctity.

And the middle class has realized this all too well. We all know how it has got even with the Poor Man of Assisi. In fact all the beauty and all the bad verse and all the rest of the appalling junk that has accumulated around the true Saint Francis and almost entirely obscured him from view has been a very effective reply to his attack.

We love to call him the *Poverello* because it makes poverty seem so quaintly remote and picturesque and it somehow reminds us of the days between wars when we went whirling through Assisi on a Cook's tour. We love to think of him preaching to the birds and perhaps it is because a congregation of birds brings with it not the slightest burden of responsibility.

There is only one way to break through the whole tissue of middle class deceits with which we are surrounded from our birth and with which we tend to surround ourselves even more as we go on. We cannot compromise with our bourgeois heritage because compromise is its own game and we cannot meet the world on its own ground.



As long as we retain anything about us that we have received from the *bourgeoisie* the world will have some kind of a claim on us. We must do what Saint Francis did: strip ourselves of everything and go away naked. And that means a very real, not merely metaphorical interior and exterior poverty: a poverty that involves hardship and suffering and hunger and privation and blind dependence on God. The way to perfection was marked out clearly enough by Jesus Christ Who, when a rich young man refused His call to perfection, remarked to His disciples: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." But always remember that in the Gospel of Christ the negative ascetic element is only one side of the coin. For to those who left all things He always promised not only "treasure in heaven," and "life everlasting" but even on earth that hundredfold reward which the Fathers of the Church recognized in the joys of contemplation.

THOMAS MERTON, O.C.R.

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### SIMPLY STATED

The modern's quest for happiness,  
Would make a body dizzy.  
Compare this to the quiet search of  
Francis of Assisi,  
And, what's more,  
We've not succeeded—  
He did.

*The bondage of a lot  
of little things ~*







# The Impotence of Money Today

Rust and moths await the things on earth when men cherish and accumulate them. Use prevents corrosion. It's the coat in the closet and not the one on the back that attracts moths. Similarly, good things are spoiled by misuse. The stomach that's pampered gets ulcers. Monetary disorders plague the societies which have put their confidence in money. Ours is such a society, now in its corrosive period. We have put our trust in money, so in the normal course of events money has failed us.

The most obvious failure of money is in respect to its most elementary function as a medium of exchange. Following the war in Europe money was of absolutely no use, and it still remains impotent for all except the very rich. This has not been wholly due to shortages, but rather to the opportunity which scarcity has provided for black marketeering. When avarice becomes very widespread, money loses its normal power of functioning. The same sort of thing exactly is happening here in America. The destitute man of today is not necessarily penniless. Having money in your pocket is no guarantee that you can obtain a roof over your head; having a regular good-paying job does not mean you can buy meat for your family or get an automobile at a reasonable price.

These curious difficulties are familiar to everyone, but the failure of money to function normally is even more evident in respect to financial institutions.

## Saving Is Anti-Social

We owe it to the Puritans to have developed a major virtue of thrift. They made it respectable (with Benjamin Franklin's considerable help) to accumulate money for its own sake. "A penny saved is a penny earned," and so forth. Thrift became an end in itself. No one would ask you what you were saving for, and no one would question the fact that you were a wise and prudent man to do so. You would get rich (like John D. Rockefeller, Sr. who was niggardly with his dimes to the end and commended those who patterned their financial conduct after him) and you would never be embarrassed by a "rainy day." Generations of American school children who were forbidden to learn about the Trinity were drilled in the virtue of thrift. Savings banks sprang up throughout the country, in whose accumulative school children were invited to participate in order to "get the thrifty habit."

True Christianity never taught thrift for its own sake. It taught that frugality (as a way of life) was more conducive to virtue than



tury, but it also taught that a man's superfluous wealth (beyond what is necessary for his state in life) belonged to the poor. The money freed from fasting during Lent was for the poor box, not the savings' account. A man was not forbidden to put money aside for the future, he didn't overdo it and if he had obligations, but his surplus was always to be tempered by charity. The Puritans, be it noted, frowned on begging as a corollary to their exaggerated ideas about thrift. They did to.

There is an irony in the way material things fail us when we fail to plan. Would Benjamin Franklin ever have imagined the day when frugality was considered anti-social for a citizen to put anything away? Yet that day is more or less upon us, although the compulsion in the matter is still for the most part hidden by a velvet glove. Nevertheless, we have so bolixed up the economic system that periodically we receive veiled threats about idle money (right now we are being urged to save as a temporary check to inflation but the mood will pass). Our fevered financial condition is dependent absolutely on a regulated flow of currency. It isn't how much money that counts, it's how often the same coins change hands. Factory workers are desirable citizens in a community because they spend every cent they earn. The conservative *bourgeoisie* is frowned upon. When a vulgar millionaire throws a pretentious wedding reception for his daughter, with champagne flowing and all the trimmings, people nod in approval and say, "Well, it's putting a lot of money into circulation and giving employment to a lot of people—a good thing."

## What Is A Sound Investment?

Only simple people save money in a capitalistic society. Shrewd men *invest*, that is, they not only lay away money but they also expect it to generate more money. Here modern man's error was to expect too much of money. He wanted to have his cake and eat it too. He wanted absolute, or nearly absolute, security on the one hand and a handsome return on the other. The two are essentially incompatible. If you furnish the capital in a joint enterprise in which other men supply the skill and labor, then you have a legitimate claim to a share of the profits, if any, but you must take the risk of losing your capital and merit the rewards. On the other hand, if you want your money to be secure, hide it under the mattress, but don't expect it to grow small dollar bills.

The history of investments has been of one long effort to circumvent nature, to achieve profit without risk. It's curious to see how inevitably men focused their attention wrongly. Had they been interested in furthering worthy and sound enterprises with their capital surplus they would have examined Amalgamated Thus-and-So with an

eye toward the common good. Since their primary (not at first the sole) interest was making money with money, they looked instead at the opportunistic angles of the enterprise (regardless of the common good) and built themselves a gambling house where the prices of stocks are determined by the speculation of traders. In this situation the tipsters and hunch-passers and fortune tellers who surround Wall Street were really as useful as anyone else in determining the day-to-day fluctuation of the market.

Everyone admits that the great Wall Street crash was not precipitated by any gross change in the country's real wealth. There was no drought which ruined wheat, or a series of major fires in factories, or a war which shut off supplies of natural resources in the Near East. Whatever the immediate cause (Was it because the banks called in their loans, so demonstrating their power to manipulate an economy built on credit and paper without organic relationship to real wealth?) it was generally agreed that the market had been heading for a crash and deserved a fall. Nowadays brokers are prevented by law from engaging in some of their more colorful deviations from right reason and honest practice, but speculation reigns king of the stock exchange nonetheless. Some men go to the races or bet on the numbers, others more respectably buy and sell stocks, but all fancy themselves prestidigitators, those who can make money fructify.

The books are now being balanced. Those whose chief desire or necessity is security are getting precious little interest on their capital. Thus, for instance, trust funds have fallen into some disrepute. Since trust companies are compelled by law to be ultra conservative in administering the estates left to widows and children (the heirs always are presumed to be widows and small children whereas often enough they turn out to be petulant and pleasure-loving adults now on their third marriage), their investments carry smaller and smaller interest rates. So much money is necessary now for a capital fund of this kind to yield an effectual annual income that few people will bother to aspire to it.

On the other hand, those whose chief interest is profit now find their only hope of security in giving their lives to following the money around. They are like men trying to cross a river with a rapid current by leaping from ice floe to ice floe as these are carried downstream. The theory is that you can't trust any stock (investments being precarious since they are no longer linked to real wealth or the virtuous management of companies), but that if you are deft you can realize a profit here, and then switch to a profit there, etc. Naturally such a man never rests easily. He can't go fishing or read Plato.

by his family without keeping a weather eye out for the financial consequences. Bernard Baruch, whose life has been spent in this fashion, planting and harvesting his fructifying dollars, once made a supreme act of renunciation by declining to transplant some of his budding dollars on a Jewish holiday out of respect to his mother. But few men have so much faith and courage.

## Insurance

The insurance situation is a variation on the same theme, with peculiarities of its own. The Christian idea, of which modern insurance is a facsimile, is that it is useful for men to band together for their mutual assistance and security, that the disasters which befall one member of a group ought to be met corporately by all members. Most modern insurance is based on self-seeking rather than mutual charity and rests not on an idea of the corporate good but on the sanctity of statistics. Men who should have looked to God's providence for their primary security, and to things like life insurance as secondary or tertiary instruments of providence and security, looked first to insurance and lost all practical trust in providence. (God became the specialist you called in on hopeless cases. The ordinary practicing Catholic today believes less in God's providence than in any other dogma.) The consequence is that in our day insurance is on one hand taking over the role of providence (as, for instance, the Metropolitan once was the largest farm owner in the country, and is now shaping the housing pattern in New York City, shaping it as though to the specifications of the Planned Parenthood Association, that is, in accordance with a pragmatic disbelief in God's care of His children) and on the other hand is proving a precarious and vulnerable providence. God's providence works this way: in return for faith and virtue practiced in the present, (Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice) God gives His solicitous care in the future (and all these things will be added unto you—however much is necessary and however God chooses to give it, whether by gift or job opportunity or a fruitful crop, etc.). Insurance works otherwise: in return for certain definite sums now, a certain, definite, like sum later. The Achilles heel of insurance is inflation. If the \$100,000 you contracted for is only worth \$50,000 or \$30,000 when you get it, then insurance has failed you. This is the disaster which hangs over all insurance in our day.

## Who Will Be God Over Us?

Almost all financial enterprises, from insurance to international investment, are increasingly at the mercy of government-manipulated currency and so serve the interests of the omnipotent state or the omnipotent world government. Our fundamental dependence for bread and



security is upon God. Money is merely one of the instruments of God's providence. Since we have put our trust in money, we have brought it about that money is no longer even a good instrument, at least of God's providence. It is becoming an instrument of a new and terrible omnipotence. The manipulation of currency value at will (the retention of gold which has an intrinsic value, was one major step which made this possible) put everyone's fortune at the mercy of the government. The government, in turn, is not yet so debased that it manipulates currency for the sheer pleasure of destroying citizens. It is usually forced to manipulate the currency in order to prevent worse disasters (as when inflating currency disposes of a crushing indebtedness). Obviously, however, the manipulation of currency is a tremendous power in the hands of a tyrant (as the Russians currently are demonstrating in Berlin) and the power to manipulate also tends to promote tyranny. The man at the financial helm has to play the role of provident God, he has virtually no other alternative.

### **Non Sequitur, Ad Absurdum**

It is currently proposed to remedy all our social ills with the mighty dollar. "Give so and so many millions and cure cancer!" "Let the state appropriate some several billions so we can have better and happier teachers." "The scourge of mental disease demands the utmost in our solicitude—financial of course."

Have we lost our power of reason? Will a dollar bill, when placed on the cancerous member, effect a cure? Is it some sort of magic? The theory is, of course, that the more money that is given to the cause the more can be spent for research; the more spent for research the more likely the discovery of the cause and cure of cancer. This does not necessarily follow. What is needed is light and inspiration. There is nothing in the circumstances to indicate that a lone doctor could not see cancer for what it is if he is given the inspiration. The road to light on such matters, in addition to fundamental medical knowledge, experience and a certain intuitive gift, is prayer. God really lights up the mind and enables men to see syntheses which otherwise are obscured from them. But who among all these great doctors has even looked in the direction of humility? They are placing their confidence in IBM tabulating machines and vast sums of money contributed by a generous and too-trusting populace.

When the public school teachers of Rochester went on strike together with the eager assistance of the newspapers, traced their discontent to low wages. The only children in the city who continued to be educated were the pupils of the nuns who receive a nominal salary of one dollar a day. There was a paradox that invited investigation, yet no one investigated. Certain it is we have bad education, rapidly wors-

Certain it is, too, that more and better-equipped school buildings almost irrelevant to the question. The quality of the teachers is key point. Our naive materialists fancy they can make better teachers by paying them more, saying, "You will attract a higher type person to the job." But will you? You might attract a lower type person, one who comes not sacrificing out of love of truth and teaching, but interested primarily in the monetary rewards. They also think they will improve the quality by extending the time spent in educational schools. But maybe the inferiority of teachers is due partly to having been subjected to inferior, nonsensical educational schools.

As for mental disease, is its increase not the most obvious manifestation of the disintegration of human beings? And are not religious faith, the observance of the moral law, and the healing and elevating effects of grace, the chief instruments by which men attain "wholeness." But what experts are reported advocating spiritual reconstruction? They want only money: money for hospitals and attendants (that is, for the custodial care of the patients whom they expect to become increasingly numerous—showing that they really despair of reversing the trend); money for the psychiatrists who are finding this situation so lucrative. But what are the psychiatrists accomplishing? And which of any of them is working in harmony with the laws of human nature? And who has measured the harm they might be doing to souls?

### **Money and the Apostolate**

If money is impotent in the field of human health and happiness, it is infinitely more so in the field of the apostolate.

The sorts of apostolic enterprises which would greatly further the restoration of our country to Christ are fairly obvious. We need a Catholic daily newspaper, or several of them. We need Catholic movies, Catholic radio, Catholic care of (and cure of) the insane, a long lay apostolate and schools that will turn out militant and integrated graduates. Money is not of the essence of any of these projects, but when they are mentioned it is money which suggests itself to everyone.

Consider, for instance, the matter of a Catholic daily newspaper. It would certainly take a lot of money to start a Catholic daily, but is there in the whole country a handful of men at once competent and efficiently Catholic in their mentality to initiate such a project? It would be much easier to raise ten million dollars than to find ten editorial workers who are fully formed and apostolic—and this despite the multitude of newspaper men in the country who are nominally, and even occasionally devoutly, Catholic.

Or consider the academic situation. Where are our great lay thinkers? Would it be possible to assemble enough real Catholic minds

to form a beginning faculty for an adult education school anywhere in the country? If there were great minds and great teachers, hardly anything else would be necessary, and within a few years an intellectual ferment would begin to raise the level and Catholicity of thinking throughout the land. Meanwhile, some rich man has recently donated a million dollars to one of our Eastern colleges for the erection of a *business school*. Nothing could be more calculated to destroy the little Catholicity of thought remains among our young men.

A similar void exists in respect of mental disease. A recent conference of Catholic nurses seriously discussed the virtual absence of Catholic mental hospitals. This is not the first time the dearth has been noted. But what is a *Catholic* mental hospital, and are the existing ones strikingly different from secular institutions? That there are accidental differences is evident, but the chief obstacle in the way of Catholic mental hospitals is the absence of a personnel sufficiently Catholic in mentality, sufficiently holy and dedicated to meet the need.

### **The Potency of Poverty**

Paradoxically enough, there seems to be only one way to break the stalemate into which we have maneuvered ourselves, and that is voluntary poverty. If money is impotent, poverty (voluntarily embraced) is a touchstone of action. Religious orders continually witness to the world of poverty's power of accomplishment. All that is needed is two or three people dedicated to poverty and service for the love of God, and the wherewithal to carry out their projects follows. The several beginners need not be geniuses. It is the power of complete dedication and the absolute incorruptibility that comes from a life of poverty that counts.

Sooner or later (probably much too late) the world is going to come to the realization that its power of accomplishment must rest on love, not avarice. The balancers of the ever-more-difficult-to-balance books of hospitals are going to realize that the care of the sick can only be accomplished with the aid of dedicated nurses working for the love of God, and never with "professional women" who are paid as much as private secretaries or ditch diggers. Teachers are going to learn that truth is more to be cherished, and more stable in the long run than tenure. Employers are going to learn that you can't buy loyalty with higher wages, handsome washrooms or public relations measures. There comes a saturation point to man's self-disgust.

Must we wait until the world learns its lessons too late? Or should we switch to a Christian economy right now?

PETER MICHAELS



# The Poor In Spirit

I must confess a secret lack of detachment: I cannot pass up any book or pamphlet about Saint Francis of Assisi without reading it. The best and in some ways loveliest book of his life, *The Larks of Umbria*, enthralled me for many hours this summer while on vacation.

What is the captivating charm about this man that even the driest heart is set on fire by the brilliance of his sanctity?

He is truly the universal saint and yet his joyous secret which he tried to make known to all was poverty—the spirit most at odds with the spirit of the world that admires him. Perhaps this admiration is a testimony to what the world knows in its heart to be true, namely, that all is vanity save to love God and to serve Him alone.

Thoreau saw in poverty a means of freeing himself from the complexities of material ownership. He was in revolt against the Puritan-Calvinistic sense of acquisitiveness that saw in the rich man someone especially blessed by heaven.

Aristotle said that food, clothing and shelter were the three necessities and all else was luxury, while Socrates wandered through the market place amazed at the number of things he could do without.

Francis knew all that they knew about simplicity of life and he understood the problem of material possessions much more deeply than they of them. He knew that at some point along the line man ceases to possess the material things that surround him and is possessed by them.

Saint John of the Cross was later to say that it took only a thin thread to hold a bird to the earth, a point to be remembered when studying this matter of being detached from material possessions.

The soul is a bird as the Lark of Umbria knew and, with the splendor of the inner vision of grace, he saw that true freedom consisted in being free of all desires save the desire of God.

In the desert Christ had shown for all time the mystery of the three temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil and the three powers. Saint Thomas Aquinas explained these as voluntary poverty, chastity and obedience. Even our modern, secularistic state intent on reforming the criminal forces poverty, chastity and obedience on him: penitentiary is a place where one is supposed to be penitent. In the name of faith, a criminal sought sanctuary in a monastery and so long as he stayed there he was not pursued by the state.

Francis plumbed to the depths of this virtue of voluntary poverty to an extraordinary degree yet the paradox of his life was that no one ever appreciated nature or material things more. He was continually singing

their praises. He was never bored by them. Who else has ever the startling concept of fire as a sister?

One saint will reach the essence of a truth one way and another saint will come upon it in another way. Saint Thomas says that one of the effects of the gift of the Holy Ghost called understanding by which we come to a knowledge of the meaning behind the material thing which is the symbol of the idea that God had when he created.

To state it another way, all material things in the universe are sacramental and that is the thought behind the liturgical view of Saint Francis, because he was so much in love with God, saw to the heart of matter with the sureness of a lark seeking the sun.

Why does a discussion of this virtue of voluntary poverty so often evoke acrimonious debate? I have often wondered. I think it a matter of two things, semantics and confusing material poverty with spiritual poverty.

First, consider semantics. Many good and beautiful words have fallen on bitter days. Take the word, charity. It is undoubtedly one of the loveliest words in the Christian vocabulary but even many a churchgoer would wince if someone said that he was the object of someone's charity.

Likewise with poverty. We have lived so long in the polluted atmosphere of Puritanism and Calvinism that we have accepted their word values and often their faith: we feel that being poor is something to be ashamed of yet the poor are the chosen of God. When the disciples of John the Baptist questioned Christ to see if He was the Messiah, He gave them the answer when He said, behold the poor have the gospel preached to them. Evidently Christ and the poor were in closer union than ordinary people.

It is true that being materially poor isn't in itself a sign of virtue. The materially poor can be avaricious of riches as much as the rich man. The communists speak of these persons as being the petit-bourgeois.

Contrariwise, a rich man may be the good steward of his possessions and really possess detachment although it undoubtedly will be more difficult for him to practice the virtue.

For Francis, the problem was one of right order. The material universe was there as a gift of God and we were to use it for fraternal love.

He knew that riches weigh down the spirit and he wanted people above all to be gay. Thomas of Celano tells of seeing him drawing a stick across his arm as if playing a viol, while he sang in French praises of the Lord. His followers, he wished to be called the minstrels of God.

Only those deeply, even madly in love with God can be truly gay for joy is the fruit of a Christian soul. Gaiety is something that

ice even in suffering, a paradox a pagan mind cannot understand. Francis could receive the searing stigmata when Christ swept down from mountain top, affixed to His cross, to kiss him and he later could meet death with the rapture of song.

The pagan will tell you that man is moved only by money. He will look only for money. Sometimes, looking at the symbols of today's times, the towering office buildings, one is tempted to accept the sophism. Step down, we know it isn't true for some men have in all ages acted in love of God. The building of churches and the work of missions constantly attests the fact. As a matter of fact the man who works in love generally does at least twice as much.

When we look at the age of faith and see the cathedrals rising in their glory, we realize the miracle Francis wrought, for his preaching flooded the despair of his time and a new life swept through Europe. Men were gay with the gaiety of souls who could believe in God and His Blessed Mother. Heaven was all around them and they covered the land with works of mercy.

Francis knew the secret language between all things. He knew not only that heart speaketh to heart but essence to essence. If the mountains leaped with joy at the sight of their Risen Savior, he knew that was meant.

He didn't want just beggary. His followers were to work with their hands at a trade but if they weren't paid for their work they were to seek their food at the table of the Lord.

The man who would be the herald of a new earth and a new heaven would have to go to Francis for this lesson of voluntary poverty. Such a man would be the instrument of grace in God's hands and even movie stars, trapped in their gaudy materialism, might pause on this edge of suicide and give up the shadow of Hades for the substance of life.

There is a cry for peace in men's hearts today. The terrible fear of the atom bomb is upon them. Their senses are paralyzed before its awful potentialities. Voluntary poverty knows the mystery of peace. Saint Francis didn't want his followers to own their monasteries but to live in them. If they owned property, he contended they would want to defend it. They were to lessen their desires and love God alone. They were to seek the quiescence of desires and that is peace.

Lenin is supposed to have said at his death that what Russia needed was not a revolution but five Saints Francis of Assisi.

The world must fall on the breast of poverty, Gertrude von Le Fort has so well said. Francis would have rejoiced in her words and recognized a kindred soul. In her *Hymns to the Church*, she says,\*



Your voice speaks:

I saw the Unrest of the World driven away in a cloud:

The quiet of evening was like a storm in her sails, she fled  
from the sunset as if in great fear.

For whither shall she turn when the Great Sleep comes, and  
where shall she take shelter, when he drives her from her  
tent?

It is in vain that she torments the sons of men and rouses the  
greed of their passion against him:

For all they can do he brews the draught that shall silence  
them forever.

The cities roar for yet a while, but the great stillness is already  
seeping through their walls.

The purple of their sorrows goes dark, and the purple of their  
lusts goes grey as dusk.

Their proud spirits grow wan as oblivion.

All willing turns to vapour, all doing becomes the dreaming  
of a dream.

Kings must sleep and mighty men must lie down like little  
children.

They all fall on the breast of poverty, and their pride turns  
simple as sand.

Then they become what they shall be in their graves.

Lord, take pity on the poor souls.

ARTHUR T. SHEEHAN



CARITAS

# The End of the Bourgeois Spirit

"The Church is the *bourgeoisie*!" For over a hundred years French workers have said so. Notwithstanding all the saints, proletarian and bourgeois, those known or already canonized, Bernadette, John Henry, Therese de Lisieux or Charles de Foucauld, or the pleiad of unknown ones scattered all over France, notwithstanding those authentic witnesses of the authentic Christianity of which the Catholic Church alone inherits the plenitude, no matter all this, still the workers would say: "The Church is the *bourgeoisie*."

And so it was. "The great scandal of the Church in the nineteenth century," said Pope Pius XI, "is not that she lost so many workers, but that she lost the working class."

This the bourgeois interpreted as meaning that the workers had no longer a brake, an opiate Karl Marx would say, whereas the real scandal was that the Church had ceased to be a lever for the working classes.

Of course it was natural, if not Christian, that the wish of the bourgeois be concentrated on holding on to what he had so dearly gained in 1789. He was holding on to it so tightly that it meant he was depriving the workers of enjoying a minimum of decent material conditions indispensable to the growth of spirituality.

Then came the separation of Church and State and, as a saintly old French priest put it, "Instead of being fully Christian and relying on God, we, priests, got in a panic and set about to arrange our own affairs by ourselves: so much for the carpet, so much for the candles, so much for a high Mass, etc., etc." And gradually the Church leaned more and more on the bourgeois and money became more and more important.

Even the interior of the churches took on a bourgeois look. The working class had made the cathedrals and was at home among the old sculptures of men, women, saints, sinners, angels and devils. Gradually a nauseating, sugary imagery invaded the churches, simpering articles were sung, oily and tortuous speeches replaced the virile thunder of inspired preachers. Everything became polished, pussy-footed, soft spoken, well behaved, emasculated. Any manual worker stepping into one of those churches felt completely out of place. That church could not be the Church of the people, the Church of God. It was the ante-chamber of a bourgeois girl.

And the workers came to hate the Church. Oh, of course, the atheist propaganda helped. But it would have been of no avail if there had been filial understanding between the Church and the people. The workers came to hate the Church all the more that their hope in

her had been so great. They hated her for having taken away the hope in her.

Violence broke out in many places in France. Priests were stoned, insulted, made fun of. Most of them managed secretly to remain authentic witnesses of Christ and His Church. Many a Bernanos' court priest heroically sowed the seed of the re-awakening that we witness today.

And a few bourgeois helped. Among them Albert de Mun. He took the bourgeois preoccupation of holding on to what one has, whether materially or spiritually, he substituted the *giving* attitude. In 1891 he said to the Catholic students: "You are Catholics; you are engaged to serve the Church. Never forget that by this fact you are also engaged to serve the poor and the weak; you are of necessity with the people." His movement is at the root of all Catholic action in France. It was the beginning of the re-awakening which has been going on ever since, first reaching an elite of thinkers which culminated in outstanding conversions at the beginning of this century—Bloy, Claudel, Psichari, Charles de Foucauld, Maritain, etc.—and finally enflaming countless workers.

For twenty years now the JOC (Young Christian Workers) has labored. Now, more active than ever, the *Jocists* work hand in hand with all the people who have re-discovered Christ and His Church. This is a bold, stark, dynamic Christianity. If years of obscure work have prepared it, the final spark came from the untold suffering in concentration camps and the dark years of the occupation. Cut off from the world, deprived of any material and physical comfort, people started to take stock of themselves. The spiritual realities were their salvation: the naked spiritual realities, without any trimming, the essential. When one small piece of bread is a matter of life and death to you, day after day, and months, and years, you come to know where your deepest allegiance lies, and so you do, when, daily, for years also, you risk your own life by hiding the persecuted. Then, when what is called normal life is resumed, you see it through what you have learned in agony: you are seized with the urgency of working along the same road which the landmarks are printed in scars on your body, mind and heart. "Come in front, now, all of you," shouted the priest back from Mauthausen, "that we may celebrate Mass together, and may not lose what we, deportees, prisoners, *requis*, found again: the Church of the beatitudes, the martyrs, the saints."

The end of the bourgeois spirit is ringing everywhere in France. It is ringing among the workers themselves. For the bourgeois attitude of holding on to whatever one has, is a cancer which has attacked all classes. The beginning of the end of the bourgeois spirit lies



ndship, in an openness, in an ever willingness to share. "You know at it is like," said the young convert in the Paris factory, "a Christian is not *possess* anything." That is, he does not wrap himself jealously around with what he has; he does not cling to it. He may have something this minute, and the next, if such has been the neighbor's urgent need, he may not have it any more. And in doing so he has not made "gift" to anyone. "If I have two shirts," said the priest-worker, "and no man I know does not have any, my second shirt belongs to him. It is not a gift I am making him. In a Christian sense the second shirt belongs to him." That's what is meant by friendship, justice, charity, in a Christian sense.

To the ferocious, individualistic bourgeois spirit, isolated within its own achievements—"the democratic privilege to make good. . . . It is up to you. . . . And now let us go back to sleep"—to this unChristian self-for-all, competitive liberalism, the Christian spirit of friendship is substituted. "It is not enough to make a success of your life. . . . You should make a gift of it."

The friendship is not for the purpose of converting. The French Catholics say, "Do not try to convert your neighbor. Love him." Nor is friendship in order to secure some material advantages. You are not friendly with your next-door neighbor so that she will take care of your baby and you will take care of her's when necessary. No. First of all, there is the openness, the friendship, Christ spirit. After that, things do start to happen, all along the line. That there may be an economic expression of your friendship, even a spectacular one like a communitarian factory, does not change the fact that the big adventure is the friendship, Christ spirit. Whatever it may lead to, it will be to heaven right where you are, in the conditions and circumstances in which you happen to be. It may mean to rent a spare room in your exclusive apartment, or to band together with other homeless families and occupy an empty house. It may mean to recite the *Our Father* with your Protestant friends. It may mean to join two others and go and live as factory workers among poor workers, pooling your salaries, sharing everything together and shouldering with the rest of the community the same burden of insecurity, to be fully *present*, in a community of destiny. It may mean to receive a parcel from America and share its precious contents with people in your building. It may mean, if you are a business man, re-thinking your business in Christian terms. The Assembly of French Cardinals and Bishops said in 1945: "Courageous leaders, in close contact with the working class, have listened to the pressing voice of the Church in France. . . . They are working steadily in their ideas and achievements to renovate in this direction the

spirit and the structure of their enterprise by associating the work with its management, its property and its fruits."

From this it is evident that friendship is communitarian in form. The unit of the Christian life is no longer the individual but the team. It was so at the beginning of Christianity. Religious orders carried it right straight through the centuries. But the great divider, Satan, worked so well, that lay people and even priests were related to each other only by external worship.

Now there are in France sacerdotal teams—priests living together, pooling all their material resources together and no one knowing who the pastor except through his outstanding sanctity. In the country isolated priests come together once a week to discuss the work of their respective parishes, help each other in it, and the meeting is an occasion not only for praying together and working but also for playing together. Some priests' teams have gone as workers in the mines, the factories, the docks. At night they gather together in their lodging no different from the lodging of the other workers. The door is never locked. Neighbors come in and out, talk, ask advice. They feel completely at home. The room looks just like their own room, the furniture is like that of the poorest, the photographs and pictures on the walls could be their own. There is nothing of that bourgeois atmosphere usually found in a parsonage. The priest himself is dressed like the manual worker that he is, only not quite so well as the other workers because he keeps giving away whatever he happens to have to the less fortunate fellow worker! The accusation of money-makers, of the collusion of the Church with the money-changers, is rapidly dwindling away in France. Many parishes have done away with fees for seats, marriages, Masses. All is voluntary contribution, and the same ceremony for all. The churches have never seen so much money before. But, above all, there has never been such a change in the atmosphere, such a fraternal spirit.

To friendly meetings the priest asks anyone, whether devout Catholic, Catholic in name only, or outsider. Sometimes it takes place in a cafe, sometimes in the flat of a neighbor. All the questions are thrashed out, such as: "What is religion good for, anyhow?" "If God exists, things would not go so badly." "What does it mean to be a Christian?" "Do you wish to participate in the liturgy?" etc., etc. This is neighborhood talk, often around the inevitable ersatz cup of coffee. The people talk freely. They unload packs and packs of questions which have been in their minds for several generations—the men especially. They do not feel estranged from the priest. He is one of them, a welder in the assembly line during the day, or he swings his pick in the coal mine. He is earning his living through the work of his hands, and he is as insect-like as they are. Far from taking away some of the respect for his sacerdotal

character, his sharing of their temporal destiny has increased and enhanced it. Said the newcomer at the factory bench: "Where did I see you before, buddy?" "In the church. I married you three weeks ago." Gradually the parish church becomes the spiritual expression of the community. People re-discover the necessity for praying together, and the urgent need of the Sacraments. It is no longer a perfunctory procedure, something "that is done," a private, eternal life insurance, but communion which is a starting point, that God being more to you than you may be more to your neighbor. "You do not save yourself alone," said the priest. The end of the bourgeois spirit.

The renewal is not sentimental. It is not a matter either of "feeling like" for your neighbor, or of improving conditions here and there. Neither is it a vast undertaking for betterment. It is a re-setting of our present day civilization and its various expressions, on the Christian loom. There is a Christian way of being a neighbor and there is a Christian way of organizing a big sea harbor, a Christian way of planning a town, of running a factory, of cultivating the soil. The sense of God and the Christian sense of man have to be recaptured, the two being inseparable. The bourgeois spirit may have grasped the first but it neglected the second. The danger might be today that we would grasp the second and neglect the first. Let us have both, say the French Catholics, and make it impossible to be cornered in a dilemma of "capitalism or communism," because we have gone ahead of everybody through our twofold total Christian commitment to the supernatural and to the supernatural integrated into the temporal.

Cardinal Suhard clearly defines the present day problem in his 1947 Pastoral Letter, *Growth or Decline*:

Who will unite the world? That is the fundamental question. Who is going to form the soul of this common civilization being established everywhere by itself, of this world up to now compartmentalized? Who will form the soul of this sudden unity which has come about quicker than our thought, of this planetary humanism for which we are not prepared? Who will produce the synthesis of this new universe? Who will be the Principle and the Inspiration?

And his answer, given in his speech at the Colombes sport stadium for the Great Return Celebration, is as follows:

The time has come when Christians are beginning to understand that they are and should be Catholics, that is, communitarian and universal. . . . The Church is not a party, a clan, a faction. . . . She feels at ease only within the limits of the entire earth. . . . Therefore, brethren, if you are to be apostles, your lives cannot be



spent in isolating yourselves, in stiffening yourselves, in holding on to everything in order to lose the least possible, but in mingling in giving yourselves, that you may grow and live fully.

This is the "full and virile awakening of consciousness" of which His Holiness Pope Pius XII spoke in his Easter message. It is, for France, the end of the bourgeois spirit.

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

(Editors' Note: More about the whole French Christian renewal may be found in Mrs. Bishop's book, *France Alive*, Declan X. McMullen.)



LET ME SEE, NOW!

The poor are not alone in pain,

The wealthy suffer too.

The many woes the rich endure

I can't recall—can you?

# Is This Tomorrow

No one likes to be critical of good intentions. As a father of growing children I appreciate the efforts that have been expended by the Catechetical Guild Educational Society to produce a Catholic substitute for the ubiquitous comic book. It is a question as to whether these screamy-meamy literary gems are treasured more by adults or by children. At any rate, the intention of those who publish *Timeless Topix*, the Catholic comic book, is to slide in a bit of Catholic information and history behind the colorful format that usually heralds the presence of Superman, the Green Hornet, and others of the same pre-natural fraternity. To all appearances the strange wedding seems to have been successful. Catholic junior will just as readily reach for a "Topix" as he would for a "Super," which is, it would seem, just what the publishers had hoped for. If the readers want blood and gore, the publishers feel, it might just as well flow from the veins of some Christian martyr as from some imaginary victim of comic strip mayhem. To be sure, it is better for Catholic junior to be held enthralled by the tale of a Christian hero in the sixteenth century than to grow astigmatic over the adventures of Buck Rogers in the twenty-fifth century.

The idea behind this venture of Catholic comic books is identical with that of many another well-intentioned attempt in our day to transform the profane into the sacred. The term "well-intentioned" is not used sarcastically. (God knows that in the long run whatever there is of any of us in this job of restoration is summarized by the term "good intentions." Whatever lies beyond good intentions depends upon charity, mutual charity. Whatever I have to say in criticism is said in charity to the degree that I can be charitable.) It is true that to Christianize a thing means to reorient it, and to change it essentially. It does seem, however, that forms which have been developed by pagans provide cramped quarters in which a Christian vitality can operate. A Christian seed produces its own kind of fruit. A Christian enterprise will develop its own form. To accept the pagan form permits that form to exercise a tyranny over the spirit with which you intend to fuse it. That is why I doubt that the format of the conventional comic book will permit of a Christian orientation. The Catholicism will be new patches on old wineskins. The substance of good doctrine will suffer until it is permitted to prescribe its own form.

*Timeless Topix* is substantially different from its secular counterparts. The facts and ideas are just the sort of thing we want our children and adults to digest. The method of drawing has been imported from the secular book with the exception of the sexy ladies and a reduction in the degree of brutality. The worst fault of the comic book has

been kept, and that is that the comic controls the child, rather than the child controlling the comic. By that I mean that the child's imagination is not merely stimulated, it is assaulted. The child's imagination is not prodded into creative activity, it is paralyzed in awe by the Colossus of the comic-gigantic imagination of the artist. There is nothing left for the child's imagination to do. It is all done for him, and far beyond his will and dreams.

A child need merely be provided with the occasion for imagination and immediately he adds muscle and flesh to the bones. As he creates the image, it is always under his control. Normally, he will not come up with a spectacle more fearful than he can behold. The delicate nature of the immature imagination is the reason why those who make pictures for children must be careful neither to assault nor overstate. Comic books, covering a wide range of subjects both real and imaginary, introduce the child to foreign areas through which there is no guiding hand to lead him. Even more than the adult, the child seeks desperately to correlate each new experience with the tiny world of facts he already knows. The experiences tossed at him by the comic-strip artists are breathtaking and vivid, but how difficult they are to reconcile with the limited experiences in his real life! This is the awful task which the comic book casts upon narrow shoulders. The result in so many cases is to produce emotional upset, foolhardy escapades, nightmares, and eventually a fagged imagination without any creative discipline of its own.

I believe that this harmful aspect of comic-book art can be corrected by a more penetrating inquiry into the ends of their work by the artists themselves. It is indicated that the pictures should be less profusion and confusion. The subject of the pictures should be less explicate. A return to good cartooning, simple, generous, laconic symbolism, would be an improvement over the exhaustive realism and pictorialism which provides the moronic fare in the secular pulps. There is no reason why the cartoon, be it ever so humble, cannot meet the highest aesthetic requirements. The delight of the beholder could be in the drawing itself, irrespective of the subject. This very worthy apostrophe should be a challenge to Catholic cartoonists to evolve a suitable formula to manifest the sublime messages and great truths for which the people hunger.

The immediate occasion for my writing this article is a study I have made of *Is This Tomorrow*, an anti-communistic comic book put out by the Guild and now enjoying a reprint in the *Catholic Digest*. Risking the chance that I too will be placed in the category captioned in the publicity sheet, "The Communists do not like 'Is This Tomorrow'."



," I insist that for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons the publication in question is a deplorable liability in the field of Catholic literature. The faults of the thing itself proceed from the erroneous premise that a Catholic source can produce an anti-communist document pleasing to the enemies of communism. Siding with Beelzebub against Satan is a dangerous business and a thing without successful precedent. A Catholic cannot speak as other than a Catholic when dealing with a matter of human behavior. In this case we have a ruthless expose of an infiltrating "ism" whose roots lie in the same materialism as the philosophy of those presumed to be our allies. In order for the thing to make sense one must accept the implied goodness of the *status quo*, which is quite difficult since the inherent evils of industrial capitalism are kith and kin to the more active barbarism of communism.

Intrinsically, this "comic" has all of the formal faults which I have described above. All of the reader's thinking is done for him, a fact which is particularly dangerous in this case where both the fundamental principles of communism as well as those of Christianity are nowhere defined. Most of the insinuations have a fuzzy demagogic cast, such as the statement attributed to a communist leader: "The breakdown of bourgeois morals has been handled very well by our people in Hollywood." As though the almighty American dollar had had part in that breakdown! Or as though bourgeois moral standards (contrasted with Christian moral standards) had been worth proving!

Obviously this portent, presented as a possibility rather than a probability, will not be accepted by either a communist or a Catholic apart from the context of history. What strikes me is that this propaganda emanated from a semi-official Catholic source. Catholicism has been dedicated by its temporal leaders to a revolution more fundamental and radical than that sought by the communists. Although Marx lived before Leo XIII, his vehicle of revolution did not come into existence until 1920 with the successful Bolshevik revolution. In a sense, then, we can say that the Catholic vehicle of revolution pre-dates that of the communists, since the body of the Faithful has always been at least potentially apostles of reform. It strikes me as unfitting that any prophecy of a communist coup could be envisioned which leaves the Catholic in the camp of reaction, rather than in the role assigned to him by Christ, a revolutionary in his own right. I think that even on paper we have no right to leave grace inoperative. I believe it is a shame against the Church to include her among those who defend an indefensible citadel of things-as-they-are.

I should at least have thought that the grain of hope for those

who cling to the things of the spirit could have been pictured by artist in the figure of a Catholic Action martyr. History could have supported him in this, for the martyrs were many in the dictatorial uprisings in Europe. Instead, our liberal hearts are warmed by a play of heroic courage on the part of a neck-tied minister, while the Catholic zealot ignominiously sells the cause of freedom down the river. When the ire of the communist regime falls upon the Catholics it is without the accusation of which they might boast. They were not murdered as Christ was, for "stirring up the people," but, apparently, just for being Catholics and going to church.

The one good that might result from this unhappy "comic" is to convince Catholics of the fruitlessness of natural anti-communism. Unless we see the challenge and meet it on a supernatural basis then we are weaponless. We must walk as David walked when he went to meet Goliath—clothed in the things of the spirit. David looked small when he was sheathed in armor forged by men.

ED WILLOCK

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# BOOK REVIEWS

## OUR HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS

### THE MEANING OF MAN

by Jean Mouroux

Trans. from French by A. H. G. Downes  
Doubleday & Ward, \$4.00

is compassionate about, the depths to which modern man has fallen, yet  
also the power of Christ to heal and elevate the worst of us. This is the  
not only of a splendid theologian but of a holy man.

One joy of the book is the simplicity and ease and clarity with which the  
difficult doctrines are elucidated. Problems of human liberty, different sorts  
of love, the relationship between the body and the soul, the effects of the redemp-  
tion and so forth, are handled with skillful competence. Everything is sharp,  
integrated. It is the balanced view of one who sees the totality because of  
his union with the Holy Ghost and not from having wandered for many years  
through a maze of superficial detail.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, called Temporal Values,  
deals with man's relationship to the created order, and is a sort of panoramic  
view. The second, Carnal Values, deals with the body, its nobility, its misery,  
and finally its redemption. This part of the book is highly instructive and  
interesting. The third and longest section, on Spiritual Values, is neces-  
sarily tougher going and some may flounder in the doctrinal parts. The author  
begins first with the human person, then spiritual liberty, Christian liberty, love,  
charity, and then the sacred character of man.

Jean Mouroux has the rare gift of seeing the synthesis that God has made  
between the natural and the supernatural in man. Natural man is a philosophical  
fiction for there has never been any such. Fallen man is not the reality  
either, for we have been redeemed in Christ. So to see any living man actually  
as he is you have to see him in relation to Christ. This comes up over and over  
again in this book. To cite only one example, among many, it is of the es-  
sence of the author's treatment of the reciprocal obligations of married people.  
That women should be subject to their husbands is a familiar if unpalatable  
maxim. Often enough people drop the ending because it means nothing to them.  
That women be subject to their husbands *as to the Lord*" is what the Church  
means. In this book you will find out why and also see why the truncated admoni-  
tion is useless.

CAROL JACKSON

## OUR ABC's

### THE THIRD SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

by Fray Francisco de Ceuna

Trans. by a Benedictine of Stanbrook  
Abbey, \$4.00

importance in any venture. It must be in the right direction. Fortunately,  
there is a growing supply of excellent books that serve to introduce the eager

Reading, thoughtful considera-  
tion, meditation and contempla-  
tion are the steps laid out by  
tradition toward a life of inti-  
mate union with God in prayer.

As usual, the first step is of



soul to the path of prayer. The Newman Bookshop has been a leader in publishing reprints of great spiritual classics.

There is no time for reading inferior or second-hand works of spirituality. One's attention should be concentrated on those books that have been written by saints or by spiritual writers of proven worth. Such is the work of Fray Francisco; it has the wholehearted approval of Saint Theresa of Avila, who is grateful for the help it gave her when she needed help badly.

Fray Francisco's concern is primarily with the practice of prayer; there is also plenty of material on the virtues, especially on those that are most necessary for the life of prayer. Careful reading, thoughtful consideration of this book will supply much material for meditation and smooth considerably the path of contemplation.

J. V. C.

## A New Anthology

### RETURN TO TRADITION

By Francis Beauchesne Thornton  
Bruce, \$8.50

This book is a directive anthology particularly valuable to the student. Father Thornton has collected in this volume the outstanding figures of the Catholic literary revival which

has been taking place during the past century. The leaders of the movement are these: Newman, Digby, Wiseman, Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson and others, along with their more modern descendants in France, England, Ireland, and the United States. Belloc is accorded the headship of one category which includes Chesterton, McNabb, Gill and others. Sheed is there and so is V. S. The French are represented in Peguy, Bloy, Mauriac, Gilson, Maritain, etc. The American delegation begins with Bostonian Orestes Brownson and ends with Bostonian Joseph Dever. Between these we meet Repplier, Sargent, May, Merton, etc.

As with all anthologies the included and the omitted do not always coincide with our own views. The standard is quite high, however, and all the material is first-rate quality.

The book should fill a great need in Catholic high schools and colleges. The literary morsels might encourage extracurricular reading and, with a few exceptions, the literature is pertinent to the generation of that modern Christian climate, the job that should occupy the minds and hands of every student.

DOROTHY WILLOCK

## WE HAD SO MANY REQUESTS FOR

the article on "RHYTHM" by Father Calkins in our June issue that we have made reprints. The pamphlet is available at 10 cents a copy for thirty or fewer, and 5 cents a copy for more than thirty. Order from INTEGRITY, 346 E. 86th St., New York 28, N. Y.

Next Month's issue of

## **INTEGRITY**

will be about

## **Spirituality For The Laity**

Father Carr's articles on St. John of the Cross provoked so much comment that we decided to devote an issue to matters of the interior life as they pertain to lay people.

The following issue in

October will be on

## **POLITICS**

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# Sermon for Comfortable Catholics

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

(Note: It was spoken by Christ Who meant every word He said.)

My dear Brethren,  
The Baptist, born a saint and sinless,  
shivered in a leopard skin,  
starved on locusts,  
preached penance,  
went to prison,  
and gave away his life  
to save his soul.  
Christ, Lord God, the all-pure,  
froze in a straw cradle,  
fasted forty days,  
went about barefooted doing good,  
sweat blood, was scourged and  
died on a cross between two thieves  
in order that He might fulfil His days.  
In other words, my dear brethren,  
God and his cousin John  
laboured in poverty,  
shivered in poverty,  
hungered in poverty,  
before they came to bliss  
while YOU would enter heaven  
rich,  
and warm,  
and comfortably full  
which is absurd.

Amen.

JIM SHAW

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